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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Expert Group Meeting on Adopting the Sustainable  
Livelihoods Approach for Promoting Rural Development  
in the ESCWA Region  
Beirut, 21-22 December 2009

# **PROMOTING RURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS IN NORTHERN IRAQ**

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# Promoting rural development through sustainable agricultural projects in Northern Iraq

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## Northern Iraq: An unstable history



- Ethnic diversity
  - Populations instability and conflicts
- Chronic neglect
  - Lack of infrastructures on natural resources
    - electricity
    - Water storage
    - productive projects, etc.
- Decentralization tendency
  - Hostility against the central government
    - Destruction of existing infrastructure as a revenge attitude

## Social problems



- A lot of disabled people because of the wars
- Refugees: multiple waves (1961, 1970s, 1990s, 2000s)
  - Consequences:
    - Adapted to the city lifestyle and don't want to become farmers again
    - Don't or no longer have the traditional know-how
    - Intensive rural exodus: Young people are attracted by cities
    - Expensive rental in Irbil: 8 times salary levels
- Language problems between Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish, Armenian, etc.
- Land tenure problems between Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and Christians
  - Collective lands

## Income generation: A political issue



- Hidden unemployment بطالة مقنعة
  - 80% of the national budget goes to the public service (army, teachers, gardiens, etc.)
  - Monthly salary of 242,000 Iraqi dinars disincentive for agricultural employment
  - Overloads the national budget without direct productivity gains
  - Attractive for young people
  - Reduction in the motivation to build capacities in the production sectors, including agriculture.

## Supporting Refugees

- Refugees are living on government subsidies:
  - 50,000-100,000 dinars monthly per family.
  - The needs are 5-6 times more.
- Meanwhile,
  - Labor cost is expensive
  - In agriculture = 20,000-25,000 dinars/day
  - (US\$1 around 1,200 Iraqi Dinars)



## What are the alternatives?

### Challenges:

- No industry
- No tourism
- Few initiatives of immigrants powerful people
  - Capitals from abroad needs stability
- Country surrounded by big producers:
  - Iran, Turkey and Syria with cheaper production costs
- The country imports almost everything

➤ **Focus is thus on agriculture in rural and remote areas**



## Status of the Agricultural Sector

- Added value crops and commercial crop cultivation are underdeveloped.
  - Possible to work on a greater number of farmers and families
  - Potential to promote import substitution and reduce reliance on imports
- Energy cost expensive for pumping and other agricultural uses
- Electricity outside working hours (16h00-24h00 in some rural areas)
- Distance from the market for fresh products; lack of capacity for storage and transport
- Public refrigeration services not used
- Lack of food processing units



## Constraints to Agricultural Development

- Monopole in some agricultural production sectors
  - Rainfed crops (cereals and pulses) where we can produce vegetables and fruit trees.
- Lack of know-how on cultivation of added value crops
- Lack of mechanization
  - Most of the work is manual
  - In some villages, we can not find even a tractor
- Neglect of existing potential
  - Small Size Dams with holding capacities of tens of thousands of m<sup>3</sup>, but are not being utilized
- Forest are still used unsustainably for wood and fuel



## Unsustainable Farming Practices

- Wheat monoculture
- Agri-business of wheat gives 50% of the selling price to the land owners:
  - Farmers (owners) are receiving a percentage depending on the rate of land
  - Good sharing of the production
- But there are socio-agronomic problems:
  - Few people are engaged in the agricultural process
  - In the village, only 1-2 farmers are cultivating the whole area
  - Low adding value
  - Low prices and profits
  - Farmers are simply land owners, not producers



## Natural Resources Potential

- Diversity of the ecosystems
  - Mountainous
  - Plains and flat lands
  - Rain fall 400-1000 mm per year
  - Few days of frost during the winter
  - Water wealth during dry season
  - Suitable climate for diverse production
  - Low density of villages in the area
- Emerging oil industry is affording more funds for agriculture development to support economic diversification processes.



## Needs

- Long term political stability
- Infrastructure
  - Water networking for improved water use efficiency
- New crop varieties that make good use of available water resources
- Value chain development
- Marketing support
- Capacity building on use of adapted and appropriate technologies
- Sustainable approach in order to improve livelihood without destroying the environment



## Recommendations

- Focus on **vegetables** since they are of high added value compared to cereals
- Focus on **fruit trees** since the area is mountainous suitable for good fruit quality
- Focus on **fisheries**
- Focus on **dairy products**
- Focus on **fodder** production through irrigation since it increases the production

## Current Initiatives Underway

- Diverse agricultural regional companies are active in the area (Turkish, Lebanese, Syrian, etc.)
- New technologies, know-how are being introduced
  - Extension of heated greenhouses: Are being located in the lower areas, not the high lands because of the snow and the risk of frost
- Improvement of pulses and cereals production
  - Improvement of varieties
  - Introduction of complementary watering schemes
- Questionable if sustainability is a priority in private sector business development initiatives

## New Project Methodology (short term)

- Collective work in selected villages of varied potential
- Collaboration with a selected number of candidates in each village
- Selection and collaboration modalities are not an easy job
- Establishment of Demonstration Fields for the:
  - Improvement and introduction of sustainable agronomic practices
  - Import of adapted high value crops (strawberry, peach, cherry, apple, etc) and of adapted varieties
  - Introduction of trickle irrigation for a better water use efficiency
  - Training of trainers and of farmers in the surrounding areas
    - Production of training material and technical guides in the local languages
- Collaboration with local authorities in the field of agricultural extension & infrastructure development
  - Refrigeration for products of fruit trees, building dams to support the villages, etc,



## Intended Beneficiaries



- Local farmers are associated directly in the programmed activities:
  - They will increase their income generation
  - They will help to showcase demonstrative case studies
- The surrounding belt of farmers will be provided with training and targeted candidates for further assistance.
  - Training focused on transfer of best agronomic practices and sustainability tools

## Project: Medium term goals

- Promoting individual projects in the agricultural sector, once know-how is acquired
- More focus on use of appropriate technologies through adapted mechanization
- More focus on strengthening the value chain, food processing and marketing.



## Conclusions

- There is a potential for poverty alleviation through sustainable agricultural development by enhancing human capacity, infrastructure and technology, as called for in the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA)
- Existing farming systems need improvement.
- Capacity building is a key factor.
- Sustainable use of the natural resources in the main challenge.
- Progress requires a long-term, multi-disciplinary process and commitment.

